Private investigator William H. (Joe) Cooper was murdered because he was very close to proving that persons in the U.S. defense and intelligence communities conspired to kill President John F. Kennedy.

That is the contention of those who knew him best – his friends, relatives and even some persons who became targets for his unrelenting investigation.

Cooper devoted 10 years of his life to trying to solve the Kennedy assassination mystery. During the past year, he became a valued TATTLER source. Two exclusive TATTLER articles were based on information provided by Cooper.

He was shot to death in the bedroom of his Baton Rouge, La., apartment on Oct. 16. After one week of investigation, the East Baton Rouge Parish (County) Sheriff's Department ruled his death a suicide. However, the chief investigator in the case said openly that the ruling was "a matter of convenience" because "we don't know what happened."

"We had to rule it something," Sheriff's Sgt. Robert J. Shortess told TATTLER. "Our only choices were accidental, suicide or homicide."

Cooper was found shot in the face in his bed at 7:30 a.m., an English-made, .38-caliber revolver resting by his left side. Cooper was right-handed.

According to Sgt. Shortess' own report, it would have been impossible for Cooper to commit suicide.

TO DO SO, he would have had to accomplish the following unlikely feats:

After placing the barrel to his right cheek and pulling the trigger, he would have had to wipe all prints from the weapon, take the gun in his left hand, place it on the bed, lie back and pull the covers over himself – all before he died.

The coroner's report indicates death was instantaneous from a bullet in the brain. Also under question is why Cooper would have gotten out of bed and placed a pot of coffee water on a kitchen burner if he intended to go back to the bedroom and kill himself.

Cooper, 50, had supplied TATTLER with information that two men, one a pilot, were offered $25,000 each to fly two unidentified men from Dallas to South America on the day Kennedy was murdered.

The detective assisted this reporter last summer in tracing the men in Louisiana. When interviewed, both said they are convinced the offer was aimed at providing a means of escape for Kennedy's assassins. They said they turned down the offer.

Cooper also uncovered evidence linking high-ranking U.S. Navy officials with key assassination figures.

Five days before his death, he talked with this TATTLER reporter by telephone. He was enthusiastic about new information he had uncovered to help solve the mystery that a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy was hatched in Louisiana.

By JOHN MOULDER
Of the Tattler Staff

THE DAY BEFORE COOPER was killed, a letter and a packet of information mailed by him arrived in TATTLER's office. Included in the package was a report, copies of a number of government documents, letters and other supporting evidence. Before this reporter had a chance to discuss the information with Cooper, he was dead.

The material is being analyzed for use in future articles.

Sgt. Shortess told TATTLER there was no apparent motive for Cooper to commit suicide.

The last time he talked to this reporter, he was in excellent spirits.

On Monday and Tuesday before Cooper's death, he had been with his son-in-law, Jesse Jarreau.

"He was in extremely high spirits," said Jarreau. "The night before he was killed, he cooked some food and brought it over to my wife and I." (Cooper prided himself as a gourmet chef.)

Cooper's wife, Lillian, was in the apartment when her husband died. According to authorities, she is not a suspect in his death. Cooper had no life insurance. Their marriage evidently was a happy one, investigators told TATTLER.

Mrs. Cooper said after Cooper had put coffee water on the stove and returned to bed, she got up, went to the kitchen and then to the bathroom.

When she heard a shot, she rushed to the bathroom and found her husband dead. The front door of the apartment was open. It had been locked the night before.

Sgt. Shortess told TATTLER a killer could have shot Cooper, then

concreted himself in a closet and escaped during the hysteria of Mrs. Cooper and a daughter, who was also awakened by the shot.

"THERE COULD HAVE ALSO been a conspiracy," Sgt. Shortess said, "and Cooper (may have) beat them to the punch by killing himself."

"But he knew enough about guns that he would have shot himself in the temple," Shortess said.

Cooper had been a policeman in Baton Rouge for 10 years. He also served on police forces in Florida cities. In Baton Rouge, he was once named outstanding policeman of the year."

His fellow officers recall that he had an uncanny knack for details. As a policeman, this was reflected in many ways. Because of a hunch, he once arrested one of the FBI's 10 most wanted fugitives.

This peculiar knack for detail led Cooper on a decade-long investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy.

Cooper pursued a theory that Kennedy's assassination was planned aboard a Naval aircraft carrier, Shangri La, during a pleasure cruise in August, 1963, three months before Kennedy was shot to death in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

Cooper, then a policeman in Fort Walton, Fla., sought information from the Navy Department about the people on the cruise. He was never able to obtain the identities of two men aboard the ship. When he pursued the issue – an investigation into what was ballyhooed as a routine junket – he was visited by a Naval intelligence officer who demanded to know why Cooper was interested.

COOPER, A WORLD WAR II NAVAL hero who received a presidential citation, furnished TATTLER with the tips that led to one of the most bizarre revelations in the wake of the Kennedy tragedy:

Two men were offered a large sum of money to fly – no questions asked – two mystery men from Dallas to South America on the same day Kennedy was murdered.

One of these men, Billy Kemp, who lives at Clinton, La., confirmed the details to this reporter. He said he had always felt that the proposed trip was to be an escape route for Kennedy's [illegible]

Kemp [illegible] told anybody about the [illegible] proposed escape to close relatives and his partner in the proffered venture.

Kemp's role in the venture is a Baton Rouge businessman. The businessman, who interviewed Kemp for TATTLER on the condition that his name not be published, he revealed the details of the offer. He said that Kemp was investigated by a grand jury [illegible]

POLICE FOUND Joe Cooper in this position, with the death weapon lying by his left side. Cooper, who was right-handed, died from a bullet that entered his right cheek (arrow) and lodged in his brain. The gun, wiped clean of fingerprints was found lying on an undershirt. The illustration offers graphic proof Cooper could not have taken his own life.

TATTLER, said he had learned that his lawyer, Dante Weber, had once met with Kemp, David Ferrie and a third man. Ferrie was a major figure in New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's investigation of the assassination.

Weber confirmed the meeting for TATTLER. He explained that it was held in the early 1960s, just before the Bay of Pigs invasion. He said the three men wanted to purchase a boat to buy a large shipment of guns to be delivered to Cuba. The lawyer said he never represented the principals in the venture.

"The deal didn't come off," he said.

Sgt. Shortess told TATTLER the [illegible] Weber named is now under federal indictment for an [illegible] involving a plane load of munitions.

Further, the man that former New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison called one of the most important people of the assassination, due to his role in the [illegible] case.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]